

CHAPTER 439**(Senate Bill 876)**

AN ACT concerning

Recognition of American Sign Language

FOR the purpose of establishing that American Sign Language is a recognized form of communication and a fully developed language for the deaf and ~~hearing-impaired~~ hard of hearing; identifying the deaf and ~~hearing-impaired~~ hard of hearing as a cultural minority group; defining a certain term; and generally relating to the use of American Sign Language ~~by the deaf and hearing-impaired~~.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article 30 – Deaf, Mute or Blind

Section 31

Annotated Code of Maryland

(1997 Replacement Volume and 2000 Supplement)

BY adding to

Article 30 – Deaf, Mute or Blind

Section 34

Annotated Code of Maryland

(1997 Replacement Volume and 2000 Supplement)

Preamble

WHEREAS, American Sign Language is a fully developed language, with distinct grammar, syntax, and art forms and one of hundreds of naturally occurring signed languages of the world; and

WHEREAS, American Sign Language is the third most common non-English language spoken in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Maryland has over ~~80,000~~ 500,000 individuals with hearing loss and American Sign Language is a language used by citizens with hearing loss, citizens who are deaf-blind, or others as a means of communication; and

WHEREAS, The right to communicate is fundamental for all human beings, because without the ability to receive and express language, the individual cannot develop the most basic of human skills, including the ability to convey thoughts to others, socialize, and develop basic reading and writing skills; and

WHEREAS, Without effective communication, the individual cannot become a productive adult and is more likely to be forced to rely on government assistance, which in turn increases the financial burden of the State; and